TEMOKALATI.

SUMMER '25-'26

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Front cover: DC-6 of TEAL in Fiji, 1950s.

Back cover: Rising Tide protest / Christina V.

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Dedicated to Tyler West (1995-2025)

Tyler was a long-time socialist activist and committed archivist of the NZ Left. He was committed to socialism as a form of truly emancipatory politics, and reflected the best aspects of the socialist movement: a commitment to education, compassion for others, and hope for the future. He was an educator, a historian, a comrade, and a friend. Tyler was a respected member of the Otago Socialist Society, managed the Notes South from Nowhere blog/archive, and ran the Left from Nowhere radio show on Otago Access Radio. ■

Introducing: TEMOKALATI

It's no mystery that working people across the world are having a tough time. We are having to deal with stagnating wages, a housing crisis, increasing cost of living, political instability, and a general feeling of unease. For Pasifika workers, there are even more problems to deal with: sending money back home, visa troubles, racism in and out of the workplace, and conservative communities dominated by church leaders. It could seem like everything is 'fucked up beyond all recognition'. But it doesn't have to be this way: a better way is possible.

The movements for democracy in the Pacific have had ebbs and flows. It has had to compete against European and American colonialism, as well as domestic infighting between democratic and anti-democratic forces. Across the Pacific, workers and toilers lack parties of their own, and are forced to align with whichever ruling class party abuses them the least. They have had their democratic aspirations squandered by corrupt or weak liberal governments, and in the worst cases (such as Fiji), have had them smashed and stolen from them by military gangs.

In Tonga, the democratic movement struggles to make substantial progress. This is in spite of democratic reforms which were undertaken since 2010, and despite the democratic movement being elected to power through the 2010s. Why is it that even though 'pro-democracy' parties are elected to power in the Pacific, little progress is made in terms of democratic reform? It is because these parties are not parties of and for workers and toilers. They are instead parties of the ruling class: the government bureaucrats, the chiefs, the nobles, the generals, the admirals, and the police.

Together, these forces act to restrain the aspirations of workers and toilers for democratic reform. They act against movements fighting for transparency in government, national ownership of utilities and industry, increased wages for workers, an end to foreign military presence, women's freedom, and more. Because workers and toilers lack a party of their own, they are unable to fight back against these forces.

But the people are not stupid, they can tell they're being played for fools. This is why many in Tonga question the leadership of the so-called Democratic Party. But without a viable alternative, they instead vote for independents, or splinter parties run by corrupt politicians. The corrupt and inept leadership of the democratic movements of the Pacific need to be overturned, and replaced by revolutionary socialist leadership.

Revolutionary socialism is the complete transformation of society, politics, and the economy. It overturns the system of private property and market economics that dominates the globe, and puts in its place a social, co-operative economy, governed democratically by working people. It replaces a government run by church ministers, nobles, chiefs, and politicians, with a government run by working people themselves. Socialists are democrats because we aim to establish a radically democratic system, called Socialism/Communism. This is a system built on popular sovereignty, the rule of the working class.

The struggle for revolutionary socialist leadership in the Pacific is going to be a long struggle. The Pacific does not have a long tradition of socialist politics to draw from, it must instead draw from the political traditions of the rest of the world – not as a model to follow directly, but as an example of how the working class can struggle for power. This is why we're launching Temokalati (Democracy): to act as a platform of revolutionary socialists in and around the Pacific.

Temokalati has two main purposes: to promote revolutionary socialist politics in the Pacific, and to inform the rest of the world of what Pasifika democrats are struggling for. But while we support, promote and highlight struggles in the Pacific, we aim to 'connect the dots' and help people understand that the struggle for democracy in the Pacific is not a lone struggle. It is instead part of a global struggle for revolutionary change and transformation.

The Pacific democrats of the past have promised democratic reform, but have only been able to provide peanuts. They are not capable of providing real democratic change for workers in the Pacific, because they aim to take control of the capitalist machinery on behalf of foreign imperialists, whether they reside in Canberra, Washington D.C, or Beijing. These imperialists, who reside in the 'Pacific rim' (the regions surrounding the Pacific, such as Australia, China, S.E. Asia, and the U.S.), want to keep Pasifika workers oppressed and exploited.

Temokalati hopes to be a paper for the Pasifika Left, promoting a revolutionary socialist viewpoint, in solidarity with the workers and toilers of the world, who also struggle for democracy and freedom. ■

History, Aims, etc

The Human Rights Democracy Movement

Brief history of Human Rights & Democracy Movement in Tonga

The Human Rights & Democracy Movement In Tonga was formed in the late 1970's by a small group of Tongans who believed that changes were needed to bring about more democratic governance in Tonga.

It was formally established and recognized as the Pro-Democracy Movement in 1992. This name was later changed in 1998 to *TONGA HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT*. Because the Government refused our application for incorporation under that name it was further changed to its current form in September 2002 in the hope it would be more acceptable. As of July 2003 government has not yet approved our application for incorporation.

Key People

The initiative to push for democratic governance in Tonga was led by prominent personalities. These courageous people were at the forefront in voicing the concerns of the Movement culminating in the 1992 Convention on the Tongan Constitution and Democracy in the Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua, Nuku'alofa. The issues addressed related to social justice, exploitation of the poor, inequality, womens' rights, land shortange, constitutional amendments and corruption.

Amongst the leaders were the late Dr. Sione 'Amanaki Havea, the late Bishop Patelisio Punou-Ki-Hihifo Finau, Rev. Simote Vea, Fr. Selwyn 'Akau'ola, Prof. Futa Helu, 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Eakalafi Moala, Havea Katoa, Viliami Fukofuka, Finau Tutone, Sione Teisina Fuko, 'Iunisi Malolo Fuka, Dr. Feleti Sevele, 'Uliti Uata, Lopeti Senituli and many others.

Aims and Objectives

The Movement primarily strives to serve the people of Tonga. Its working philosophy is based on the text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Christian principles.

Our objectives are:

- To act on behalf of the people who support the Movement and believe in an open, free and democratic government;
- To strive to achieve the goal of forming an open, free and democratic government of the people, elected by the people, for the people, based on the principles of equality, justice and peace;
- To seek the most appropriate democratic system of government for Tonga;
- To encourage public discussions and dialogue on various aspects of a democratic government;
- To cooperate with other organizations and associations which have similar principles and objective;
- To encourage and defend the doctrines of the 'Rule of Law' and the true separation of powers in government;
- To strive to achieve democratic control of ownership of all natural resources for the benefit of all Tongans and the proper management and protection of natural resources and the environment for the benefit of the present and future generations.
- To achieve equal access and rights of all citizens, both men and women, to employment and education opportunities, information, technology, housing, health and welfare services, cultural and leisure activities and the law;
- To achieve greater equality in the distribution of income, wealth and economic and educational opportunities.
- To ensure that all human rights and fundamental freedom are entrenched in Tonga's Constitution and are implemented;
- To discourage all forms of discrimination.

Work Agenda

The Movement's annual work programme is focused primarily on public education and advocacy. This annual work programme includes weekly radio programmes, fortnightly television programmes, fortnightly village seminars and workshops for youth, website, Annual Human Rights Situation Reports for Tonga, Essay Competitions, Advisory Service to the Public, a library, an annual Human Rights Week program.

Sixteen identified issues of the work programme include: Tonga citizens from overseas and their operations in Tonga, Public Utilities and Services, Income generating bodies in which government has interests and investments, Land/Environment, Constitution, Government Accountability and Transparency, Education, Military Expenditure, Church, Government Income and Expenditure, Non-Governmental, Youth and Community Organisations, Corruption, Foreign Policy, Women's Rights, Drugs.

How is the HRDMT organised?

The legitimacy and authority of the Movement is derived from its membership. The main decision-making bodies of the Movement are the Annual General Meeting, and The Executive Committee.

HRDMT AGM

The AGM is held once a year within 3 months of the end of the previous financial year of the Movement in July. All registered members are obliged to attend any AGM and each member is entitled to one vote. The AGM is open to all members of the public to attend, (which includes the Government, Churches, NGOs, Private Institutions and others) and voice their concerns on any matter on the agenda. However, only registered members are entitled to vote.

Membership

Any Tongan citizen who agrees with the ethos of the Movement and supports it aims and objective is welcomed to join. He/she must also abide by the Constitution and by-laws of the Movement. Intending members are required to apply in writing to the Executive Committee. On approval, he/she is expected to pay the annual subscription fee of $5.

What makes HRDMT unique?

We are a democratic institution, a non-government organization; gender sensitive and will continue to exist for the people of Tonga.

HRDM Office Bearers 2002-2003

It is the responsibility of the AGM to elect the Office Bearers of the Movement. It is also the responsibility of the AGM to elect members of the Executive Committee. The HRDMT Executive Committee is made up of the 6 Office Bearers and 18 elected members. There are 5 seats in the Executive Committee reserved for women and two for Youth. There are also seats for one representative each from the 'Eua, Niua, Vava'u and Ha'apai, Tongatapu Parliamentary electoral constituencies, and two each from the Western, Central and Eastern districts of Tongatapu.

The Executive Committee meets every 2 months though the Chairman has discretion to call emergency meetings when the need arises.

The Office Bearers for 2002-2003 are:

- **Rev. Simote Vea** (Chair)
- **Prof. Futa Helu** (Deputy Chair)
- **Kaufo'u 'Amato** (Treasurer, Ex-Officio)
- **Lopeti Senituli** (Director of the HRDM Office, Ex-Officio)
- **Samiuela 'Akilisi Pohiva** (Secretary)
- **Po'oi Pohiva** (Development Liaison Officer)
- **Finau Tutone** (Deputy Secretary)

HRDM Office

The HRDMT Office employs paid workers. The Director is the head of the office and is answerable to the Executive Committee. In 2003 there are three permanent empolyees including the Director.

The Director is responsible for the daily administration of the office and its staff. He ensures material and financial support for the Movement, prepares annual reports to present to the AGM and partner agencies and bi-monthly reports to present to the Executive Committee. He also establishes and maintains good relation with the Government and all sectors of Tongan society, partner agencies and other organizations in the national, regional and international level.

The Office is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the works of the Movement approved by AGM, Executive Committee and Staff Meeting of the HRDMT Office. ■ **planet-tonga.com/HRDMT**

Colonial massacre in Nouméa...

Pro-Kanaky contingents march in suppport of an independent Kanaky

Independence for Kanaky now!

Translated from Massacre colonial à Nouméa : Indépendance immédiate pour Kanaky ! (French), Le Bolchévik supplement, 16 May 2024. Printed below is a translation of a supplement of Le Bolchévik, publication of the Ligue trotskyste de France, the ICL's French section.

MAY 16—The French state's West Bank: cops and/or armed settlers assassinated at least three Kanak during the night of the 15th. The massacre was premeditated: the cops came to provoke the militants on the roadblocks, notably at Montravel and Saint-Louis, until they rose up in an explosion that the colonial rulers decided to drown in blood. Hundreds of youth have been wounded and incarcerated, while already 90% of prisoners in the colony are Kanak or Oceanians. [Prime minister] Gabriel Attal decreed the state of emergency and today announced the deployment of the army to Kanaky, including through the requisition of commercial airlines. Civil aviation workers: prevent commercial planes transporting troops or cops to Kanaky from taking off!

We stand with the Kanak people in their struggle for independence. The massacre of 15 May shows the impasse at which the struggle has arrived. The Nouméa Accords concocted by the SP-CP Jospin government in 1998 simply froze the problem, preserving French domination for a further 25 years. The only way to go forward is not through appeals for calm by prolonging the Nouméa Accords or seeking another illusory compromise with French imperialism. The latter desperately clings to Kanaky to maintain a presence in the Pacific. It must be ousted by mobilising the power of the working class—in Kanaky in the nickel industry, the ports and airports and public services—at the head of the oppressed Kanak, Wallisians and ni-Vanuatu immigrants as well as the minority among the Caldoches who are for independence.

This is manifestly not the perspective of the FLNKS [Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front] or the PT [Labour Party] who continue to call for calm and have even denounced the explosion of anger by the Kanak youth. They have sought to channel the growing anger among the Kanak in demonstrations of unequalled magnitude (on 13 April 60,000 people assembled, nearly a quarter of the population of the colony—the Kanak themselves are only about 120,000), with the aim of warning Paris that tension was rising. For months they begged Macron to do something because they wouldn't be able to restrain their people forever, in particular the young generation. The arrogance of French imperialism vis-à-vis the Kanak is only equalled by its blindness.

The immediate trigger for the explosion was the vote in the French parliament on the revision of the electoral body of the colony, which would make the Kanak officially a minority in the local institutions to the advantage of the settlers. This would dispossess the Kanak leaders of the few little sinecures which had been granted to them in the running of the colonial apparatus and the nickel refinery in the North—which moreover has just been closed by its effective owner, the

multinational Glencore. The French Duval family, owner of the historic SLN nickel refinery in Nouméa, is also turning away from Kanaky, investing in Indonesia, where the ore is higher grade than that of the Caillou [Kanaky]. The whole nickel sector on which the economy of the island rests is failing. The only way out is to develop industry to refine the ore in situ, with the necessary power plants, a plan which is incompatible with the maintenance of colonial oppression and with the law of capitalist profit.

But the whole perspective of the leaders of the FLNKS and the PT/USTKE [Federation of Unions of Kanak and Exploited Workers] is to continue hanging on to the Nouméa Accords, hoping that the colonial power will organise a new self-determination referendum on their behalf and in an "impartial" manner. As long as the Kanak remain caught up in illusions in these accords they will not be able to trace a path forward.

The truth is that Macron has decided to bury the Nouméa Accords definitively, taking advantage of the massive abstention by the Kanak in the referendum of December 2021 (the third and last, according to the accords), at the height of the COVID epidemic. Indeed, the decision of the Kanak leaders to accept the lockdowns in the face of COVID which was then striking the island was correctly interpreted by Paris as submission to the French state. The Kanak chiefs entrusted the struggle against the virus to the colonial power, accepting the locking up of the population at home instead of struggling for an independent path by mobilising the working class against the colonial power to defend the health of the population in the face of the pandemic, and linking this struggle to that for freedom and socialism. Macron took advantage of this, proceeding forcefully with a referendum that he was assured of winning thanks to the abstention decided by the FLNKS and the PT (for our part, we called to vote yes to independence).

Today in the métropole [European France], the urgent task is to mobilise the working class in solidarity with the struggle of the Kanak people. For that it is necessary to show them that they have an interest in a crushing defeat of French imperialism in Kanaky. If French imperialism were chased out of Kanaky it would be of enormous encouragement to the struggle of the working class against capitalist power here—just as Algerian independence in 1962 was the veritable precursor of May 68. The obstacle is the republicanism of the French left which chains the working class to the bourgeoisie. The left continues to support the colonial Nouméa Accords, which it prettifies by talking cynically of a "decolonisation process" and dangling the promise that the Kanak could be given sufficient crumbs while preserving the vital interests of France in the region.

It is obvious that the banlieue youth can see in Kanaky a mirror of their own oppression and the similarity between the onslaught of police violence which crushed them last summer and what is being carried out in Nouméa. In the same way, they sympathise with the Palestinian people, victims of the genocidal terror of the Zionist state, which has the full support of French imperialism. To mobilise these youth in particular on the side of the Kanak people it is necessary for starters to forcefully take up their defence against repression and fight for amnesty for all those who have been convicted.

Mélenchon preaches "decolonisation" within the Republic

This requires crossing a red line in Macron's eyes, a line that the LFI [La France Insoumise, France Unbowed] neither can nor wants to cross. To go forward it is necessary to break with republicanism and all those, including the LFI, who propagate it among the workers and oppressed. Mélenchon hasn't failed to make vague declarations of sympathy for the Kanak people, as he did for the [youth of the] quartiers … and then went on doing nothing to defend them in the face of massive repression. Recall the program of his 2022 campaign, in which he boasted that France was the "second maritime territory of the world" with 11 million square kilometres, a calculation based essentially on France's colonial possessions.

Far from taking the side of the Kanak youth in struggle, Mélenchon now expresses on X (15 May) his "total sadness in the face of the violence sweeping through Nouméa, ruining 40 years of efforts of peace and will to peaceful decolonisation." What cynicism! In these last 40 years, as in those since 1853, the successive governments of French imperialism have done nothing but oppress the Kanak and pillage the natural riches of the Caillou! Mélenchon appeals to Jupiter [a nickname for Macron]: "President Macron, it is time to make the gestures which will appease. Rise up to the height of Michel Rocard and François Mitterrand, Tjibaou and Lafleur." Mitterrand (the mentor of Mélenchon), who said in 1954

that "Algeria is France," directed the systematic massacre of Kanak indépendantistes right through the 1980s. His subordinate [then-prime minister] Rocard had the colonial Matignon Accords signed in 1988 in order to put an end to the struggle for independence—the only "decolonisation" worthy of the name. Pro-independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou betrayed the struggle for Kanak liberation by signing these accords with the chauvinist loyalist Jacques Lafleur! In reality, Mélenchon's only worry is that the short-sighted brutality of Macron will end up losing "New Caledonia" for French imperialism.

For all these reasons, the liberation of the Kanak people and that of the workers and oppressed of France are intimately linked. They require here and in Kanaky a real communist leadership. Socialist and national Kanak liberation requires driving out French imperialism. But this will only be the beginning of the struggle, it will only be possible to complete it with the definitive overthrow of imperialism itself. Today the struggle of the Kanak people for their freedom can be a lever to advance the struggle for socialist revolution in France itself. For the working class in France to seize it, it must break with the republicanism which enchains it. French troops, out of the Pacific, Africa and the Near East! Independence now for Kanaky and Polynesia!

■ **Ligue trotskyste de France, 16 May 2024**

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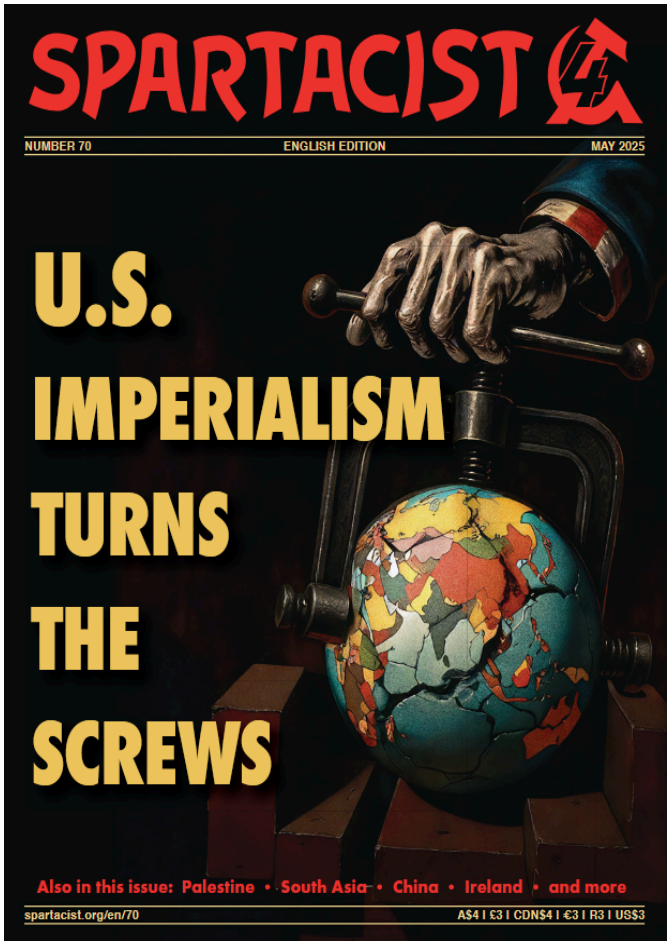
You should also read...

Te Pou Whero

Spartacist



History catches up with Tongan king

Tonga, once a sleepy island kingdom sunk in tradition and religion, was rocked by riots on Thursday 16 November 2006, as frustration with the royal government hit boiling point. Almost overnight, Australian and New Zealand troops appeared on the scene patrolling the scarred streets of the capital Nuku'alofa and controlling its airport.

"Our presence is not about taking sides. New Zealand has been fully supportive of peaceful democratic reform in Tonga," said New Zealand foreign minister Winston Peters. But Tongan academic Dr Sitiveni Halapua said the word on the street in Nuku'alofa was that the foreign troops were there "to make people afraid and to support the government."

The monarch has been the focus of increasing discontent in Tonga, which is still ruled by feudalism. Three quarters of the land is owned by the 'nobility', and the prime minister and deputy prime minister are appointed by the king, as well as many judges and most cabinet ministers. Only nine of the 32 MPs are elected by 'commoners'.

Strikes by civil servants last year against low pay and the privatisation of public services snowballed into a massive civil disobedience campaign against the decrepit 87-year-old king. When he died in September, royalist nobles fooled themselves into thinking that the public show of mourning (which was anyway compulsory) meant most Tongans didn't want change. Australian High Commissioner Colin Hill encouraged the new king, Oxford educated George Tupou V, to drag his feet over democratic reform. "Too rapid democratisation could lead to instability in Tonga, and I wonder whether the majority of Tongans really want rapid change anyway," Hill said. Prime Minister Feleti (Fred) Sevele confidently said he was "99 per cent" sure the anti-monarchy unrest was a thing of the past.

But slow-burning anger at the monarchy could not be defused from the top. Privatisations and free-trade policies have impoverished ordinary Tongans, while the royal family has enriched itself massively. The new king, George Tupou V, is a multimillionaire thanks to control of Tonga's electricity generation, its beer company, half its unexplored oil supply, one of its mobile phone companies, a cable television company and the rights to Tonga's Internet domain name.

But the reckless greed of Tonga's aristocracy has not just angered ordinary Tongans. Local business owners, politicians, and professionals who have no problem with the monarchy's right-wing social and economic agenda believe that the looting of Tonga's wealth has been unfairly dominated by the feudal nobility. These elements have seized on the civil service workers' strike and popular anger at the king to push for a 'democratic' regime that they can dominate.

This conflict between urban business elites and the old nobility is nothing new – what's unusual about Tonga is that the monarchy has hung on so long, while kings and queens have been toppled all through the rest of the world. Feudalism is an economic system based on land ownership that has been steadily superseded by capitalism. This has often meant a violent, revolutionary struggle between the rising capitalist class and the old aristocracy. Always the struggle has been decided in the end in the favour of the business class, often with a

guillotine.

Whenever monarchy has survived, it's been on the sufferance of the new ruling class. Queen Elizabeth is as much a relic of feudalism as Tupou V – with the difference that Elizabeth is an employee of the British ruling class, while the Tongan monarchy has existed at the sufferance not of Tongan business owners, but of a foreign ruling class – first British, and now Australian and New Zealander.

Now that the monarchy can no longer ensure political stability, it is no surprise that Australian and New Zealand government support is evaporating – both they and the Tongan urban elite that leads the pro-democracy movement know that a change in the regime would not change the economic dependency of Tonga on NZ. "We'll push for as much democracy as can be gained in Tonga," Clark declared recently. "Tonga has been a feudal monarch, and there is no place for that in the 21st century."

Most likely a new "democratic: government would be even more dependant on foreign support; it would support free-trade, open up more of the country to foreign corporations, and attack the wages and conditions of working people more vigorously. The 80 per cent wage rises that the king was forced to give the civil servants would be the first to go, and the sale of land would likely force more people into wage slavery either in Tonga or overseas.

The Return of Colonial Government

New Zealand and Australia are far and away the biggest countries in the South Pacific. Therefore, our rulers say, we must take on the bigger burden of ensuring peace and stability in the region. The lightning deployment of New Zealand and Australian troops to Tonga is not colonial-style gunboat diplomacy, they argue, just being good neighbours.

Aussie and NZ soldiers and police are currently being neighbourly in Tonga, as well as the Solomon Islands and East Timor. Warships and troops are on standby in case of instability in Fiji as well. For almost a decade, Australian military analysts have warned of a worsening "arc of instability" stretching from Indonesia to Melanesia. These predictions are coming true as the cash-strapped Pacific states are starting to fall apart.

But this is not just charity work for insignificant little atolls. The 14 Pacific Island countries (including Papua New Guinea) have almost double the population of New Zealand (over 8 million people), a combined land mass of 530,000 square kilometres, and untold mineral wealth, plus fisheries and lumber. And neighbours share, of course. East Timor has given Australia far more oil rights than international law demands – no doubt in gratitude for the peace brought by Australian military occupation.

The pattern of economic domination is the same for all Pacific countries. Australia and NZ provide aid, but enjoy massive trading surpluses. NZ's trade surplus with Fiji, for example, is roughly forty times the $6 million provided by NZ aid last year. These interventions are not done for charity.

But direct intervention smacks of colonialism. NZ and Australia were both originally settler colonies of Britain, which for almost a century directly controlled Britain's Pacific colonies. With victories worldwide against racism and imperialism in the last century (both in the Third World and Australia and New Zealand) colonial rule became politically impossible and power was handed over to local elites in the 1970s.

But the 1970s were also the beginning of the end of the post-war economic boom, and these local elites have been forced to push down living standards, and slash jobs and spending – much like Rogernomics in 1980s New Zealand. As governments fail to deliver, people lose faith in them and stability breaks down. This has proved as true for the Solomons as it was for the old Yugoslav federation, and it will happen in New Guinea, Fiji, and no doubt, Samoa.

This poses a dilemma for the Australian and NZ ruling class, who would rather not reimpose direct rule but are running out of allies on the ground. The Australian ruling class, which largely exterminated its indigenous population is more gung-ho than our rulers, who are well aware that colonialism overseas could spark a backlash from the large Maori and Pacific minority here.

Just as we oppose the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, we also oppose NZ and Australian occupations in "our backyard". Fighting for equality here means supporting the fight for equality internationally as well. Colonialism in any form is a step backwards that will do immense harm. The best support working people here can give the Pacific is fighting racism, defending public health and education, and demanding open borders. ■

Andrew Tait, 2006 (ISO Aotearoa)

For Aboriginal Sovereignty

This article is based on a speech by Gary Foley to the Rainbow Alliance conference held in Melbourne in March 1988, and subsequently published in Arena (#83, 1988)

On 26 January 1988, Aboriginal Australia celebrated and gave a great show of solidarity, an expression of our ongoing sovereignty of this country. We've never relinquished the sovereignty of this country. I think it is important that people realise that it's not a question of coming and looking at the poor little old Aborigines and asking what you can do for us. I believe that we are in a position to teach you how to do the sort of things that I think you have come together to talk about at this conference.* I believe that Aboriginal Australia politically is in a very healthy position in terms of controlling our own affairs within our own community. We have an ongoing battle trying to get more resources to enable us to do the jobs that we want to do properly. But Aboriginal Australians have proven, especially in the last 20 years, that we are capable of solving our own problems if we've got control over the resources to do so.

An example is in the area of health care. Aboriginal people in the last 15 years in particular have built up a system of health care that is unique in the world. It is the only health care system that we know of which operates in accordance with the basic guidelines laid down by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for effective delivery of community health care. It is a revolutionary system for the simple reason that it's not the so-called professionals who run the system. It's not a system run by doctors or by people who have been to university and have letters after their names. It's a system that has been conceived, designed, established and is today controlled by the Aboriginal people themselves Aboriginal people from the communities in which these health services operate. It began 15 years ago with an Aboriginal health service in Redfern, which had been set up by the Aboriginal community, and one in Fitzroy, Melbourne. Today, there are about 60 Aboriginal community-controlled health services throughout this country. As a group of organisations, they are represented nationally, politically, by their umbrella organisation which is the National Aboriginal Islander Health Organisation (NAIHO). It is no accident that in the last 15 years both conservative Liberal governments and conservative Labor governments have done everything they possibly could to try and undermine that organisation. The simple reason is that the bureaucrats and the politicians have seen NAIHO for what it is - a threat to them and their power over Aboriginal people.

Too many Australians find it very difficult to accept that Aboriginal people are capable of controlling their own affairs; are capable of doing things better than your so-called white experts can. And as a result we are perceived NAIHO has been perceived as a threat, especially by the bureaucrats. For 15 years they've done everything possible to try and starve that organisation of resources when at the same time that organisation has done unbelievable things. It has not only overcome immediate problems within the communities where it operates but has also strengthened politically and nationally the Aboriginal community.

Around 1980, the federal government allocation for Aboriginal health was about $20 million a year. Considering the appalling health problems confronted by the Aboriginal community it was chicken-shit money, but at the same time even the $20 million was denied Aboriginal health services. Sixteen million of that 20 million used to be handed straight over to the various state health bureaucracies around Australia, not one of which was involved in the delivery of primary health care. They were all running what they called preventive health programs which in reality simply meant that they employed a few token blackfellas to make their offices look good and black, and they made posters telling Aboriginal

people to wash their hands after they go to the toilet. That was their preventive health program. They didn't take into account the fact that many Aboriginal communities at that time had no access even to running water to wash their bloody hands. At the same time as those $16 million were going into totally inappropriate, totally pointless state health bureaucratic programs, NAIHO, representing at that time about 50 community controlled health services throughout this country, delivered an integrated primary health care and preventive health care program. According to the WHO this is the only way you can deliver effective health care. Those 50 community controlled health services, scattered all over Australia, were expected to operate with about two and a half million of the remaining $4 million. And yet despite all the attempts to confine our operations, to control us, to deny us the resources needed to do the job properly, we still managed through sheer effort, through the incredible courage and determination of thousands of Aboriginal people. We managed not only to bring about identifiable improvements in the health of Aboriginal people where these health services were, but we also built a formidable national political organisation in the NAIHO: an organisation that in conjunction with other national Aboriginal organisations was able to extend the Aboriginal political movement into the international political arena to such an extent that the chickens are now well and truly coming home to roost for the Bob Hawkes and the politicians and the bureaucrats of Australia. There has never been the extent of international scrutiny of Australia that exists today, especially in this wonderful year of 1988, possibly the best year for Aborigines so far at least politically.

What was potentially a politically disastrous year for Aboriginal people has been transformed into a great success for us. The bicentennial seems to have fizzled out a little bit lately. Not too many people seem all that interested in it. But lots of people, both within Australia and overseas especially, are vitally interested in what's happening in Aboriginal Australia.

Now you can go and set up Rainbow Alliances and whatever you like but it is important that you learn that we don't want you to come and say to us "what can we do to help you?' It's important that you look at the true history of our political struggle, especially in the last 20 years or so, and come to the realisation that we've got a lot to teach you about how to build a grass roots movement

Gary Foley (right) speaks at 1988 Invasion Day panel.

from the bottom up, not from the top down. I think if you look at the way in which the Aboriginal movement has organised itself, you will see that we didn't start off by a few hot-shots getting together and making decisions on behalf of the people at the bottom. It began from the bottom up, from the community out, identifying specific problems in a given community and then helping people gain knowledge and information about what was going on around them.

Information is power. And through people gaining information about what should happen or what shouldn't happen, or what their history is, and what's gone wrong, we're able to get our community organised. For example, when the Aboriginal Legal Service in New South Wales was first established it was something that came out of the Aboriginal community as a direct response by Aboriginal people to a specific major problem that existed in their community. And the NSW Aboriginal Legal Service became an extremely important organisation in the political history of the modern day Aboriginal political movement. It made an incredible contribution. It was one of the key organisations involved in the Aboriginal embassy.

People have to look honestly at their own history. I don't believe enough non-Aboriginal Australians know much about the reality of the Australian historical experience; about your history; about our history; about the two and where they connect. I think it is really important for people to learn that, and make other people aware; you must try in some way to come to terms with it and at least begin to understand and try to figure out how to overcome the incredibly entrenched racism that exists to this day in this society. Australia has such a long tradition of racism and there's not enough discussion of that. There aren't enough attempts to come to terms with that; to understand it; to try and remove the scourges of racism, sexism, and exploitation from the Australian community. You need to look inwards to start figuring out how to overcome that.

You've got to do all those things before you come to us and try and do anything with us. Learn from us. Aboriginal people are doing alright. Politically, we're doing brilliantly. There's a lot of room for improvement, but we have a strong united national political movement which not only attempts to bring about political change, but, parallel with that, is actually overcoming specific problems that confront our community. It's not something that's separate from helping people take control of their own lives. It's something that happens with people in conjunction with each other, not apart and separate.

If you look and learn from the Aboriginal experience you will see that Aboriginal people have tried to take control of their own affairs to exercise true self-determination. Ordinary Aboriginal people themselves have organised and contributed to the whole process. It's because Aboriginal people have organised themselves in such a way that I think is absolutely brilliant. There's no other group of people in this country who have gone from the position we were in 20 or 25 years ago to where we are today.

We are strong and united today. Any of you who marched on 26 January in Sydney can only have been overwhelmed in the same way I was by the unbelievable feeling of that day. And it was tremendous to see non- Aboriginal people marching with us and they got caught up in the spirit of the thing too.

We're strong, we're united and we're working on a multitude of levels, all of which ultimately form one great self-determination for Aboriginal people in this country: we must achieve economic independence for ourselves as communities of people. But if we achieve that in the next ten or 20 years, we will still be surrounded by an Australia that is in all aspects diametrically the opposite of our society. We'll end up as what amounts to socialist enclaves in the midst of a mad capitalist white Australia; a twisted white Australia.

The only sort of Australia that I think Aboriginal Australia can ultimately live alongside in true harmony is some form of socialist republic Australia where racism, sexism and exploitation have been eliminated. Now, we're doing alright in organising our mob. What the hell are you mob doing? You are so disorganised and splintered. It's vitally important that you get your act together, because whether we like it or not, we're all in this together. ■ **Gary Foley (Koori Web)**

Capitalism is a sinking ship

The capitalist system has created a world with plenty of wealth but plenty more poverty and want. Food rots, uneaten, as food corporations would rather the food be destroyed than distributed freely, lest their profits suffer. Clothes, cars, furniture, electronics; all produced constantly in greater and greater number to be sold in international markets that can barely accommodate the volume. The atmosphere becomes full of carbon dioxide and harsh pollutants, as sea levels creep higher and higher. Things aren't produced to serve human need – but to serve businesses aiming at selling everything that isn't nailed down (including the nail gun).

Capitalism became the dominant system on Earth by sweeping away the old, backward social orders. Capital broke the chains of feudalism, freeing the serfs and peasants from absolutism and drudgery, but shackled them with new chains: wage labour and the market. All things became a commodity: items made to be bought, sold, exchanged, hoarded jealously in international markets. People become economic units, detached from the very world they work to build. This monstrous machine continues to poison the rivers, parch the land, and pollute the air, all in spite of the cries of workers and toilers across the world.

The chaos of the market pushes society to cycles of destruction and reconstruction. The constant need for the system to reproduce itself, often by cannibalising itself over and over again, creates crisis after crisis. Such a crisis is a feature of the system, not a bug. Commodities must continue to be produced, even if they can't be sold, or else companies will lose profit, and spiral into bankruptcy. Commodities are produced even when people can't afford them. Eventually, this causes a crisis in itself, and the system will once again eat itself alive to stay afloat, at the expense of workers and toilers.

This is a social order in rapid decay, which lives in spite of its own death drive.

The Pacific is a region at the forefront of the system's slow, but destructive, decay. The climate crisis, accelerated by rampant mineral extraction and pollution by the imperialist countries (often outsourced to peripheral countries), is causing increasing sea levels to engulf the pacific island countries. For example, the government of Tuvalu made a deal with the imperialists in Canberra to allow Tuvaluans to emigrate to Australia and become permanent residents: such a deal is only necessary because the Canberra regime acts as a bodyguard for the capitalist system in the Asia-Pacific. While Australia pollutes and extracts, it is the tiny pacific countries that must pay the price, in particular the working people of these countries. By no means do the nobles and elites need to struggle as much as the rest of us. This treaty between Australia and Tuvalu signals the beginning of Australia's consolidation of its control of the pacific: it is not hard to imagine that countries at risk of sinking, such as Kiribati, would want to pursue similar deals. Such deals offer nothing in terms of recompense or reparations for impacts Pasifika peoples – only wage slavery in the imperialist countries.

The struggle to overcome the capitalist system becomes more and more important each day, as the sea levels rise and the system threatens greater and greater crises. It is a system which perpetuates itself by keeping control over production in the hands of an increasingly shrinking class of business owners and administrators: if working people held control of production, they could restrain extraction, redistribute surplus based on need, and provide recompense to those impacted by the worst of climate change. The capacity to educate, feed, provide for, and ensure the prosperity of every person on Earth exists: it is simply kept away from us by the ruling class.

Capitalism can't be allowed to continue. It must be fought by a mass movement of working people across the world, fighting for the emancipation of all the oppressed. Crisis after crisis has shown that capitalism is a sinking ship, and we would be better off abandoning ship, instead of trying to bail water out as more holes appear. Working people across the world have the power to transform society for the better, creating a world governed by free association, cooperative, peace and democracy, and the free development of all peoples. ■ **Brunhilda O & Max J for Temokalati**

President Wenda: ULMWP condemns the massacre and bombing in Intan Jaya and Kiwirok

On behalf of the ULMWP and the West Papuan people, I condemn the massacre perpetrated by the Indonesian military in Intan Jaya. Fifteen people have been murdered by the occupying forces in a new escalation in the highlands. Four have also been killed during ongoing bombing operations in Kiwirok.

At 5am on October 15th, Indonesian military forces entered Soanggama Village in Intan Jaya, where they surrounded a men's communal house. The soldiers then raided and destroyed the building, shooting eight civilians dead in the process. They also captured, tortured and murdered three men during the raid. A woman was tortured and raped before fleeing, though she was later chased by soldiers and drowned in the Hiabu River.

Soanggama Village is now added to Bloody Wamena, Bloody Wasior, Bloody Paniai, the Biak massacre, Bloody Abepura, the 2023 Wamena massacre, and many others. I am reminded of my own childhood in 1977, when Indonesia bombed my village, tortured, raped, and murdered my family members.

At the same time, in Kiwirok, four TPNPB members were killed during a series of drone bomb attacks. Lamek Taplo, Commander of the Ngalum Kupel TPNPB was killed by an Indonesian drone bombing yesterday, along with three other fighters: Ike Taplo (22), Nalson Uopmabin (17) and Benim Kalakmabin (20). Taplo had bravely brought the consistent bombings and massacres in Kiwirok to the attention of the world by giving testimony in documentary films made by Paradise Broadcasting. In his last statement before his death he described how Indonesia was using fighter jets and drones to bomb villages in Kiwirok.

This is not an equal fight, it is David versus Goliath. The TPNPB are guarding their ancestral land with bows and arrows, and a few guns taken from raids. The Indonesian military is using unmanned drones, missiles, helicopters, sniper rifles and fighter jets.

I have warned the world since 2018 that Indonesia has been bombarding the Papuan Highlands. They have conducted bombing campaigns in Kiwirok, Intan Jaya, Puncak and other areas. Over 100,000 West Papuans are right now displaced because of these military operations. But the world has let us down. Even as the situation in Kiwirok has escalated, no Pacific leaders have intervened or condemned Indonesia for their crimes. The difference between Kiwirok and the genocidal attacks on my people in the Baliem Valley in 1977 is that we had no camera to record us, no way of showing what they did to my tribe, my aunts, my mother. Now the Ngalum Kupel people have video evidence of the destruction of their villages. There is no excuse for silence any longer.

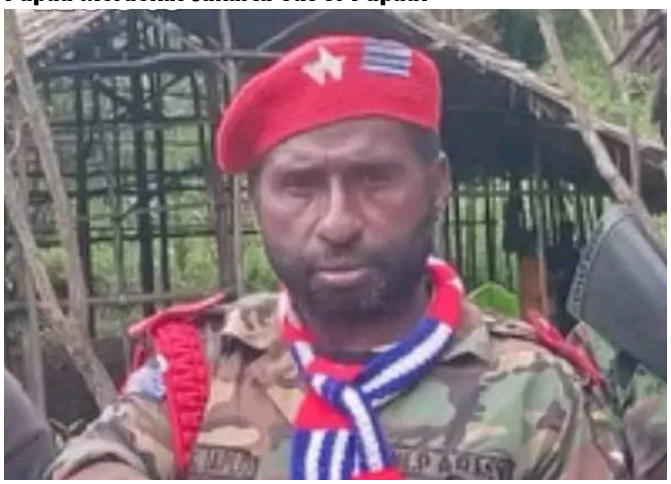
West Papuans can expect no justice in the coloniser's courts. Soldiers who murder innocents are rewarded and called heroes. Even the murderers of children in the Paniai massacre were acquitted. We rely on the international community to be our voice. Once again, I ask Pacific leaders to stand for West Papua as the rest of the world stands for Palestine. This massacre shows what West Papuans have been screaming for years: there can be no more delay. On behalf of the ULMWP, I demand:

- That Indonesia immediately allow a fact-finding mission by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as has been demanded by over 110 UN member states.
- That Indonesia lift the blackout and facilitate access to journalists, NGOs and aid organisations.
- That Melanesian and Pacific leaders urgently demand and pressure Indonesia to facilitate UN access to West Papua.

I again condemn these massacres, and offer my deepest condolences to the families of the victims. May they rest in peace. The struggle continues. God Bless West Papua.

Benny Wenda, President ULMWP
20 October 2025

BA MAHUTA LAMEK TAPLO: Brig. Gen. Lamek Taplo of the Ngalum Kupel section of the West Papua National Liberation Army was killed on October 19th 2025 by a bomb dropped by a drone, launched by Indonesian colonial forces. Papua Merdeka! Jakarta out of Papua!



Working Class History

The 1959 Oil Workers Strike in Fiji

In the late 1950s in Fiji, the cost of living was rising. Indigenous Fijian workers, along with the formerly indentured Indo-Fijian workforce, chafed under the exploitation of the colonial, capitalist system. Some workers, like unionist Apisai Tora, had been radicalised by the experience of fighting in WWII and returning to continued hardship at home. It was Tora's union, the newly-formed Wholesale and Retail Workers General Union (WRWGU), which launched the oil workers' strike of 1959.

It began on 7 December. The union rejected an offer from their employers, which included only a minuscule pay rise and didn't address any of the workers' other demands around working hours, holiday pay, and sick leave. With their hands on the fuel supplies of the country, the strikers were able to bring many aspects of everyday life to a halt. In just over a week, the strike mobilised not only oil workers and drivers, but also huge crowds of supporters. Thousands picketed petrol stations, protested in city centres, and scuffled with police.

In his article "Class Struggle in the Pacific", socialist Vinil Kumar describes this as "the first urban multi-racial strike by Indo-Fijian and indigenous workers in the country's history," demonstrating "the potential economic power of the growing urban working class and its ability to rally mass support". This article draws heavily on Kumar's article, with thanks.

Colonial History

Fiji was annexed by Britain in 1874, with the consent of some of the country's chiefs. As Kumar writes,

"In the late 1860s and early 1870s, armed rebellions known as the Kai Colo waged a struggle against the colonising power, but were ultimately defeated by troops and armed settlers from Australia, and armed Fijians from the eastern regions. A Great Council of Chiefs was created in 1876 which enshrined their power as the figureheads of the colonial state."

This power would come to bear in the 1959 strike.

In 1879, the colonial government brought in workers from India under a system of indenture known as Girmit, another form of brutal colonial exploitation. These workers became the main source of plantation and urban labour.

Colonialism, racism, and exploitation were sources of oppression shared between Indo-Fijian and indigenous workers. Meanwhile, the social and economic structures of colonial, capitalist Fijian society created tension between them. The leasing of Fijian land by freed Indian labourers-turned-farmers was a source of friction, often deliberately stoked and exploited by the colonial administration and capitalists.

The oil workers' strike of 1959 was a culmination of all of these political forces, bringing Indo-Fijian and indigenous workers up against the colonial administration, the local ruling classes, the exploitative capitalist system, and entrenched racial injustice and division.

As white settlers moved into Fiji to take up land for cash crops, the 'Kai Colo', groups of indigenous Fijians, fought against them. Indigenous Fijians fought primarily with war clubs. Photo: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 1389-032

Fijian trade unionist and politician Apisai Tora addresses a trade unionist conference in Budapest, Hungary, in 1968.

A history of struggle

This was hardly the first mass strike in Fiji.

In 1920, the remnants of indenture were abolished. That January, (predominantly Indo-Fijian) workers at the Public Works Department in Suva initiated a strike against an increase in their working hours to 48 hours a week. Within a day, the bosses conceded to this, but rather than retreating, the workers pushed for more. The strike spread to Nausori, Rewa, and Navua. Thousands of sugar industry workers took part, bringing towns to a standstill. The colonial press called it "martial law", and the Indian Women's Association was labelled "Bolshevist" for leading crowds to physically confront scabs.

"We do not get enough to satisfy our bellies", the strikers declared, demanding a pay rise in line with rising living costs. It was clear that they were also protesting their oppression at the hands of Europeans, directing their anger at racist bosses, business owners, overseers, and officials. In Suva, hundreds rioted in protest against a European hotel owner who beat his Indian servant and abused passing Indians.

The government armed European and indigenous Fijian strikebreakers and called on international assistance. The Australian government sent a warship. Another warship, from New Zealand, was delayed when workers refused to load it. Though the Fijian strikers defended themselves fiercely, the strike ended after just over a month. Along with force, political manoeuvring had been deployed. As Kumar writes, the end of the strike came partly due to "the efforts of a wealthy Indian planter and nominated member of the Legislative Council who secured a return to work and the banishment of one of the strike's key agitators".

Militancy and anti-imperial sentiment persisted, with a six-month shutdown of the sugar industry following the next year. In 1943, Indo-Fijians refused to fight for the British Empire, instead launching strikes across cane-growing districts. Once again, the Fijian government enlisted forces from Australia to help crush this rebellion.

Solidarity and Division

The colonial government feared that the Indo-Fijian workers' struggle could inspire sympathy from indigenous Fijians. During the 1920 strike, Kumar writes, "Fijian labourers in the sugar industry sympathised with the strikes and also began to demand higher wages for themselves". Enlisting indigenous Fijians as special constables and strikebreakers was one way to militate against this, though, as Kumar writes, "even the scabs brought in by CSR began to turn against the company after experiencing what it was like to work for them".

To strengthen their position, the colonial administration painted themselves as defenders of indigenous Fijian society. This intensified after the strikes and protests of 1943, which provoked Europeans to rail against the "disloyalty" of the Indian population. European hotelier JJ Ragg addressed parliament in 1946, denouncing the "great increase in non-Fijian inhabitants" and calling for Fiji to be "kept as a Fijian country".

Despite these attempts at divide and rule, the 1959 strike provided a glimpse of the joint struggle that the colonial administration feared.

Scenes from the Strike

Along with Apisai Tora, another leader of the strike was James Anthony, of Indian, Irish, and Polynesian descent. Anthony had been influenced by Australian communist Kevin "Big Jim" Healy, who was living in Suva at the time.

Their union covered oil workers at Suva's Shell and Vacuum Co. depots. Pickets at these depots were dramatic. As Kumar describes:

"On the morning of 9 December, trucks fanned out across Suva to supply fuel to petrol stations under police escort. Anthony was at one petrol station when supplies arrived, and mobilised a crowd of 400 people in protest. At a second petrol station, a crowd of Fijian and Indian protesters gathered and formed a human barricade to stop queues of cars from driving up to the pump. Indian and Fijian drivers were persuaded to show solidarity by

not refuelling.

By the time the police arrived, only the European drivers remained. Staff abandoned a third petrol station and when a white Shell employee tried to take over operations, demonstrators sabotaged and shut down the pumps by removing the fuse box. The manager of a fourth petrol station fled when protesters arrived, telling the police that they could serve customers themselves. All throughout the city, bus drivers were confronted and the whole bus network was paralysed. Taxi drivers joined the strike, some abandoning their vehicles in the petrol queues or in the city with "on strike" scrawled across their windscreens."

Here is one police officer's account of a mass meeting, called by Anthony at 5 pm that evening:

"When we got there, the bus stand was absolutely full of people, women and children predominating. I think they were very excited indeed. I don't think they were alarmed. In fact, most of them seemed to be enjoying the situation immensely. There were crowds surging from one side to the other, singing nothing in particular – three cheers for this, that and the other... There were peals of very high pitched laughter. I did not know what to make of the whole thing."

When initial attempts to disperse the crowd were laughed off, the police resorted to batons and tear gas. The crowds scattered and regrouped. Barricades were built, groups of youths scuffled with cops throughout the night, and unrest spread across the island.

Diffusing the Strike

On 10 December, the police granted permission for a mass meeting. Expecting to hear from union leaders, strikers were instead addressed by three of the highest chiefs in Fiji, including Ratu Kamisese Mara, who would go on to become the country's first prime minister and then president. Also speaking, was an Indian member of the Legislative Council, BD Lakshman. These figures of authority were deployed to diffuse the strike, admonishing the strikers.

Over the next two days, the chiefs continued to denounce the strike at meetings across the island. Oil workers and taxi drivers continued their strike, but skeleton bus services resumed and supply chains began to restart as more workers, especially indigenous workers, gradually returned to work. Kumar writes that "the Fijian president of the WRGU was also impacted by these arguments":

"He encouraged Anthony to seek medical attention for exhaustion, then immediately called in Mara, who introduced union delegates to company representatives and negotiated a settlement on the company's terms. By the time Anthony returned, most of the union's executive had ratified the deal and he eventually relented."

Making Waves

Resounding victories are not the only moments worth remembering. The world we live in today is shaped by the struggles of the past, and the class fighters of Fiji are an important part of our political whakapapa. The forces that contributed to the 1959 strike's demise also had a lasting impact in Fiji, as ISO member Lily Atu described in a recent talk, with ethnic division shaping the politics of the military coup of 1987.

Just as the past impacts the present, when workers make waves in one country the ripples are felt on distant shores. The ruling class understands this interconnectedness, which is why the governments of Australia and New Zealand did not hesitate to respond when the colonial government in Fiji called on their aid to crush striking workers.

Today, the New Zealand ruling class continues to collaborate with their international counterparts to undermine the safety and self-determination of workers in the Pacific, whether it is through RIMPAC war games, Five Eyes spy networks, coercive aid arrangements, or exploitative trade deals. In response to global protest movements for peace and justice, governments around the world are working together to tighten their hold over their populations.

Reading this history, we would do well to take inspiration from the boldness and unity of the Fijian workers in 1959, and also from the solidarity of the New Zealand dock workers who refused to load the warship heading to break their strike in 1920. It is through practical acts of solidarity like this that we have the potential to turn the tide of struggle in favour of our comrades abroad. ■ **Romany Tasker-Poland for ISO Aotearoa**

Packed House for International Solidarity Dinner

Red Spark's inaugural International Solidarity Dinner to Defeat Imperialism filled the Brunswick Neighbourhood House on 4 October in Melbourne.

The event brought together around 70 people of all ages for an evening of internationalism and revolutionary spirit. Guests came to show support for struggles against imperialist domination in Palestine, Indonesia, Timor Leste, and beyond. Over dinner, they heard stories of resistance, contemporary political analysis, and glimpses into the history of the Communist movement.

Shamikh Badra of the International Committee of the Palestinian People's Party. Photo: Diana Pratiwi & Red Spark.

Shamikh Badra representing the International Committee of the Palestinian People's Party (PPP) and a Palestinian from Gaza, travelled from Sydney to attend. He shared personal experiences and the PPP's analysis of the current situation in Palestine. The following day, Badra also addressed the Palestine Solidarity Action held on 5 October.

Cheago "Agus" Perez, a Central Committee Member of the Socialist Party of Timor, delivered a spirited account of the Timorese people's victorious independence struggle — a new story for many in the audience.

Andrew Irving, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia, "toasted" the Black Armada struggle – the historic union bans on Dutch shipping that supported Indonesian national independence. Irving noted that these actions, led in Australia by the Communist Party, were part of a broader wave of solidarity in Asia. Members of the Lebanese Communist Party based in Australia were also in attendance.

Kieran Bennett from the Anarchist Communist Federation motivated the coming anti-fascist mobilisation in Melbourne on 19 October.

Bureaucratic obstacles in Australia's visa system affecting people not in the middle class meant Ilham Jimbo, leader of the Indonesian union SEBUMI, was not able to attend in person. Addressing the crowd via video, Jimbo and Susi, SEBUMI's president, discussed their union's work including tactics for fighting sexism and harassment of women in factories and other worksites.

Marxist intellectual Vijay Prashad also addressed the crowd, sending a short video analysing the current situation in Palestine.

Performers from Musik Bergerak – who are active in the campaign against the Prabowo Government in Indonesia – including Pipin Paradigma, further raised the mood with revolutionary songs ranging from Hasta Siempre (Comandante) to Bella Ciao and Darah Juang – an anthem of the Indonesian movement.

Gathering together comrades from different generations, traditions and organisations was a big success. It produced an interactive, lively and very interesting environment appreciated by all. Red Spark is a project to re-establish revolutionary Marxist organising in Australia. Bringing a new generation of revolutionaries in contact with the history, traditions and personalities of struggle is a crucial step forward. There is much more to come. ■ **Sam King for Red Spark / red-spark.org**

Revolution & Counter-Revolution in Tonga

The 2006 riot

The first riots started at 3pm on Thursday, November 16th. The first targets of the rioters were government buildings in the capital city of Nuku'alofa. Then, they moved on to buildings owned by government officials and foreign banks, in particular ANZ and Westpac. Police stood on the sides of streets and watched helplessly as the violence took place, or perhaps they weren't assed to stop it. At the Chinatown Hotel, a gang of youths arrive, followed by a quarry truck. Despite the pleas of the hotel's owners to spare the building, it too is soon torched with firebombs.

All sorts of people participated in the riots: the young, the elderly, men and women. But the more bombastic acts of violence – such as the firebombing, car tipping, the demolitions, were seemingly done primarily by younger men. By the end of the night, most of the capital city had been burnt to the ground. Tongan Police and military were scarcely able to retake control of the capital's CBD.

Earlier that day, a crowd of several thousand gathered in Nuku'alofa, near Tongan Parliament. The expectation of the crowd was that the nobles, who were guaranteed seats in Parliament, would support parliamentary and electoral reforms which would, among other things, increase the number of seats for people's representatives (MPs elected by commoners). This did not come to pass. Instead, Tonga's parliament (Fale Alea 'o Tonga) adjourned for the year. This angered the crowd. Armed with hammers, sticks, rocks and bricks, they vented their frustrations through the last means available to them: a riot.

On paper, Tonga had been a constitutional monarchy since 1875, when King George Tupou I adopted a modern constitution. Though Tonga had been unified as a single entity since 1845, it wasn't until the adoption of this constitution that Tonga became a 'modern' state. This constitution enshrined a parliamentary style of government that is similar to, but not exactly like, the 'Westminster system' developed in England.

This parliament held seats for hereditary nobles, as well as for representatives elected by commoners. While ostensibly upholding the principle of equal representation for nobles and commoners, as it often goes, the nobles and chiefs held most of the power in government. This is not to say that the nobles are, or were, necessarily a monolith, or that they voted as a bloc, since the nobles rarely formed a unified front of their own. But their class position granted them access to power and a proximity to the royal family that allowed them to politically outflank commoners, in parliament and beyond.

The Prime Minister and Cabinet were all appointed directly by the King. This was the case until 2014, when 'Akilisi Pohiva of the Human Rights & Democracy Movement (which had formed the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands by that time) was elected PM. The Human Rights & Democracy Movement (HRDM) is a liberal reformist movement, which aimed to reform the Tongan political system to squash corruption and adopt a more liberal-democratic structure which would strip the King of direct executive power.

The Human Rights and Democracy Movement

The HRDM was founded in the 1970s, first as an informal grouping of liberal and democratically minded politicians, lawyers and professionals in Tonga. It was formalised in 1992 as the 'Pro-Democracy Movement', and it fielded candidates for the 1999 election. The HRDM/PDM had a political orientation which was never fully coherent. Its members were broadly Christians and Liberal, but did not have a wholly unified view of what kind of democratic system would be best for Tonga. By the 1999 election, its members and leadership included Dr Sione 'Amanaki Havea (Wesleyan minister and developer of 'Pacific theology'), Rev. Simote Vea (Wesleyan minister), Fr. Selwyn 'Akau'ola (Roman-Catholic Priest and editor of the Tongan Catholic monthly

King George Tupou VI (centre) with Tongan nobility. In Tonga, nobles have guaranteed seats in parliament. Photo: Tonga Independent News

Taumu'a Leilei), Prof. Futa Helu (founder of the liberal and independent 'Atenisi Institute—both a high school and university), 'Akilisi Pohiva (teacher, radio host, newsletter editor, and long-time democracy advocate), and many others.

While democratic pro-reform candidates won more seats than previously in the 1999 election, they received fewer votes. For example, in 1996, 'Akilisi Pohiva got 9,149 votes in Tongatapu 1, while in 1999, he got 8,556. Of the nine People's Representatives elected, five were pro-reform: 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Uliti Uata (HRDM founder), Sunia Fili, Samiu Vaipulu, and 'Esau Namoa. Their success, despite their fewer votes, is attributed mainly to their style of campaigning. Unlike traditional elections for People's Representatives, the HRDM/PDM candidates campaigned as a bloc, running awareness campaigns in villages in electorates they intended to run in. However, it is important to note that People's Representatives, even the more ideologically vocal ones, are mostly elected based on personal factors (familial relationships, etc).

Class in Tonga

Much of the political struggle for democratic reforms is influenced and heightened by class in Tonga. Class stratification in Tonga, and indeed the entire Pacific region, is complex. In Tonga, this involves different forms of social divisions which often overlap, and sometimes contradict each other. There are clans (ha'a) which fall under chiefly titles and estates owned by chiefs and nobles (hou'eiki). Hou'eiki maintain power in Tongan society (past and present) through various means. Their power is consolidated socially through faka'apa'apa (deference/respect). On the one hand, it is a form of social cooperation between peoples that crosses classes. On the other, it is a form of feudal obligation between rulers and the ruled.

Like other indigenous peoples worldwide, Tongan culture has a complex system of kinship. Tongan kinship survived modernisation, though it has changed form over the centuries and decades since. Kinship establishes gender roles, patriarchal authority, and the transfer of property between generations. For example, in Tongan families, control over property is held by fathers and eldest male children/siblings. However, sisters have a higher 'rank' in the Tongan system of rank and power than brothers do. This contradicts the fact that the elder brother has more authority in the family/kāinga than the elder sister does. Despite their higher 'rank', sisters do not have authority over brothers. While both men and women are respected (faka'apa'apa), men are respected on the basis that they have power and authority, while women are respected on the basis that men have an obligation to care and provide for them.

This speaks nothing to the broader system of social class that developed both before and after capitalism took hold in the Pacific. Families do not tend to cross class lines. Families rarely if ever comprise both commoners and nobles. In the chiefly system, chiefs and nobles (the 'eiki) ruled over estates, which were territorial divisions including both entire islands, and sections of islands. This class of chiefs and nobles had ruled the islands that made up Tonga for thousands of years. In modern Tonga, the rule of the chiefs and nobles is less extreme, but nonetheless persists in spite of centuries of capitalist modernity.

Prelude and aftermath of the 2006 riot

Politically, Tonga is a strange country. It has an ostensibly democratic (and unicameral) parliament, though it wasn't until the 2010s that elections actually changed the composition of government. The HRDM campaigned strongly on government transparency, anti-corruption, limiting the power of the monarch, and liberal democratic reforms such as a separation of powers and 'rule of law'. In 2006, HRDM leaders urged and supported a street protest in Pangai Lahi. This protest was held on June 1st, when Tonga's parliament opened. This peaceful protest was suppressed by the Tongan state, which then launched fines and legal proceedings against its organisers ('Akilisi Pohiva, Teisina Fuko, and

Soldier stands guard beside journalist after 2006 riot. Photo: John Ewen / CC-BY-SA-2.5

others), though many pleaded not guilty. If only the monarchist government had the gift of foresight — as the suppression of this peaceful protest only increased tensions which would boil over in November with the riots.

The aftermath of the riots in November 2006 saw the immediate launching of a state of emergency by the royalist government (headed rather reluctantly by Feleti 'Fred' Sevele, who had taken over as PM after the resignation of 'Ulukālala Lavaka Ata/future king Tupou VI) which lasted until the early 2010s. The state launched a legal assault against the democracy movement: democratic leaders such as 'Akilisi Pohiva and others were arrested and charged with sedition in 2007, though these charges did not stick, and Pohiva went on to successfully be elected to the electorate of Tongatapu in the 2008 election.

Almost immediately following the riots, pacific rim imperial forces from Australia and New Zealand entered Tonga — ostensibly to help the government 'restore order'. 110 soldiers, along with 44 police officers, arrived from AU/NZ to supplement the Tongan police and military (the Australian contingent was comprised of the 1st Battalion RAR). What followed was a little over a month of imperialist terror: both foreign and Tongan police and military rounded up hundreds of protestors and non-protestors alike. Soldiers assaulted everybody, young and old, for as little as drinking alcohol on the street. The imperialists withdrew their forces in December 2006, though the damage had already been done.

The 2008 election was an upswing for the democracy movement, which showed its resilience against the anti-democratic state of emergency. 'Akilisi Pohiva criticised the continuation of the state of emergency:

"I don't see any reason for government to continue to hold on to the emergency power. There are a lot of allegations against the Prime Minister and some of the ministers. And I think the government, especially the Prime Minister and the Minister of Tourism, they are under threat and they still have to respond to so many allegations." (RNZ, 28 January 2008).

While the state of emergency persisted, in 2008 the democratic movement elected six representatives: four from the HRDM, and two from the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The PDP was formed in 2005, after its founding members were expelled from the HRDM/PDM over disputes around candidacies. It was established at a founding meeting at the 'Atenisi Institute, and included 'Atenisi founder Futa Helu. Police Minister Clive Edwards, long hated by the movement for his role in supporting the monarchist government in his capacity as police boss, was also a founding member of the PDP (known as the Tongan Democratic Party in 2005). The PDP was also the first registered political party in Tonga, since the HRDM was not a registered political party. The cracks were beginning to show in the 'pro-democracy movement', which was never a single unified force to begin with.

In 2010, democratic reforms were adopted. The number of People's Representatives was increased from nine to seventeen, giving commoners more representatives than nobles. There were now four political parties: the Democratic Party (founded by the HRDM/PDM), the People's Democratic Party (now defunct), the Sustainable Nation-Building Party (formed by Auckland-based lawyer Sione Fonua, now defunct), and the Tongan Democratic Labor Party (an attempt at a social democratic party, formed by members of the

Leaders of the 2006 Pangai Lahi protest. Photo: Linny Folau / Matangi Tonga

Public Services Association, seemingly defunct).

The 2010 election had mixed results for the democrats. While the Democratic Party earned less votes than its HRDM parent did in 2008 (partly due to the electoral reforms changing numbers, and new parties running after splits in the movement), it won more seats (as more seats were given to commoners). The People's Democratic Party, which won two seats in 2008, lost both of these in 2010. However, this election set the stage for the democratic party's historic win in 2014: when 'Akilisi Pohiva became the first commoner to be elected PM. Pohiva would govern as PM from 2014 until his death in 2019.

The often overlooked history of Tonga's democracy movement, as divided as it is, has many lessons for the international socialist movement. It shows that even in countries as deeply conservative as Tonga, there can, and does, exist a (at the very least liberal) reformist current willing to mobilise politically for changes to the system. But, crucially, we must recognise that liberal reformers cannot bring true democratic change, nor lead the workers and toilers to power.

The HRDM/PDM and DPFI (Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands) has waged an admirable struggle for democratic reform in Tonga. However, it has shown itself to be incapable of taking the big steps necessary to establishing a truly democratic system. Most importantly, it is a liberal-bourgeois movement influenced by Christian ministers and intellectuals, who have no interest in abolishing the monarchy or establishing a republic.

The events of 2006 were nothing short of an attempted revolution. It came after decades of political organising by the democratic movement, and historic strikes by public service workers in 2005. The events of November shook the royalists and the nobles to their core, and they worked hard to smash the commoners and restore order, with the backing of their pacific rim imperialist allies in Australia and NZ.

But peace and order are fleeting. It is more than possible for a revolutionary upsurge to take place a second time in Tonga. It leaves open the question of leadership, particularly, revolutionary leadership. Tonga lacks a socialist movement, though the attempt at a social democratic Labor Party may have laid the groundwork for one. With a suffocating political atmosphere marred by suppression and intimidation, it seems likely that the development of revolutionary socialist leadership for the Tongan workers and toilers must develop in exile – amongst the diaspora living in the pacific rim and beyond.

This movement cannot win power from the outside: it must carry out political awareness campaigns and organising drives inside of Tonga, to build the movement domestically. Tonga prides itself on being the last kingdom in the Pacific. With any luck, it may be able to pride itself on being the first democratic republic in the Pacific. ■ **Max J for Partisan**

Friends of Temokalati:

PARTISAN!

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia, and an organ of independent, communist journalism.

Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states. ■

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Overview of the West Papuan Independence Struggle

Papua is a large island situated to the north of Australia. On the eastern half of the island is the independent state of Papua New Guinea, a former colony which ostensibly declared independence from Australia in 1975. The western half of the island is, officially, part of the Republic of Indonesia. In 1961, the western half of the island was poised to declare independence as the Republic of West Papua. Betrayed by their Dutch rulers and occupied by Indonesia, the West Papuans have waged a struggle for independence continuously since the occupation began.

Free West Papua activists join rally for Palestine in Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland). Photo: WP News.

Historical background

The colonial period of Papuan history began in the 16th century, when the Sultanates of Tidore and Ternate began establishing trading enclaves along the western coast of Papua. These sultanates carved out a powerful empire in the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago, and even after the Dutch conquest in the 17th century, continued to rule as Dutch proxies until the 19th century, when the Dutch brought the region more under their direct administration.

This lasted until the second world war, when the region was conquered by Japan. While Japanese rule was itself oppressive, the power vacuum created once they surrendered gave crucial space for the Indonesian independence movement to launch an all out struggle against the Dutch.

The central vehicle for this struggle was the nascent Republic of Indonesia, which was formed in Java and pushed a largely unitary and Java-centric idea of Indonesia. As the Dutch saw their rule collapsing, they began attempting to build legitimacy through promoting an alternative vision of Indonesia, promoting the interest of non-Javanese groups and attempting to build up federal infrastructure in the eastern half of the archipelago. When independence came in 1949, part of the condition was that the new government recognise these federal structures.

However, the Dutch refused to transfer sovereignty of West Papua to the new Indonesian state, citing the West Papuans' distinct national identity. In Jakarta this was seen as proof of what they had always suspected: that any agitation for minority rights was actually a neo-colonial ploy to undermine their sovereignty. The question of what West Papuans wanted was not considered at all.

The Dutch continued to rule West Papua as 'Dutch New Guinea' for the rest of the decade. Initially, independence was not considered in the short term but, ironically, this changed as a result of increasing military pressure from Indonesia. Elections were held, resulting in the creation of the New Guinea Council in 1961. On 1st December 1961, the new national flag of West Papua was raised for the first time, an occasion that is still commemorated among the West Papuan diaspora and illegal to commemorate in West Papua itself.

Indonesia during this period was one of the leading voices of the Non-Aligned Movement, a loose alliance of formerly colonised states. In a few years, the US will back a violent coup in Indonesia to realign them to western interests, but at this point it was attempting to use diplomacy to do so. Indonesia's ongoing conflict with the Netherlands, a key NATO ally, was a hurdle for this. The US began to put pressure on the Dutch to resolve the 'West New Guinea dispute', eventually culminating in the 1962 New York Agreement, in which the Dutch abandoned West Papua on the condition that the Indonesians organise a referendum on West Papuan independence.

Indonesia sent in the military to take over administration of West Papua and immediately began to violently suppress independent political organisations. They held what was officially known as the Act of Free Choice, but is more commonly known among Papuans as the Act of No Choice. The Indonesians claimed that Papuans were too tribal to understand a one-

person, one vote secret ballot, hand-picked 1,025 Papuan elders and had them hold a musyawarah, a traditional Indonesian form consensus-based village meeting, while surrounded by Indonesian soldiers. Naturally, this resulted in them agreeing to incorporation into Indonesia. This was accepted by UN observers, who were mostly just there to rubber stamp the proceedings. Indonesia's occupation was officially given international legitimacy.

Current situation

Indonesia's administration of West Papua has been one of straightforward settler colonialism. Under a policy known as 'transmigration', which was inherited from the Dutch, the Indonesian government relocated thousands of landless Indonesians to West Papua, resulting in a drastic demographic and cultural shift in most of West Papua's urban centres. This program ended in 2015, but migration from Indonesia into West Papua is still highly encouraged by the government.

Indonesia's colonial policy is partly assimilationist. Sanitised versions of West Papuan culture are periodically deployed as part of Indonesia's professed image as a nation "Unified in Diversity". Meanwhile, usage of Bahasa Indonesia has been made compulsory across the education system, resulting in

Act of free choice (Penentuan Pendapat Rakyat, Pepera) in 1969 (Permana, 2016)

Bahasa becoming the lingua franca among West Papuans. This familiarity with Bahasa, and Indonesian culture more generally, can be seen in the slogan of the independence movement itself. Papua Merdeka, or 'Free Papua', uses the Bahasa word Merdeka, which has powerful connotations in Indonesia due to its usage during their independence struggle.

Despite this element of assimilationism, the Indonesian government is ultimately not too focused on integrating Papuans. No policies have been taken to foster the creation of a

Organisations of the struggle

OPM-TPN (Free Papua Organisation – National Liberation Army): The OPM was the first major organisation to agitate for West Papuan independence. Formed in 1965, the OPM, through its armed wing the TPN, believed that violent resistance was the only way to gain independence. The OPM was the dominant independence organisation within West Papua until 1976 when there was split between one of the founders of the TPN, Jacob Prai, and the TPN's military strategist, Seth Rumkorem. While this split ended OPM's organisational dominance, figures from the OPM have continued to play an important part in basically all of the major factions in West Papua, and the organisation still maintains an important symbolic position within the movement.

ULMWP (United Liberation Movement for West Papua): The ULMWP was formed on 7 December 2014, as a unification of three groups; the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL), the Federal Republic of West Papua (NRFPB) and the National Parliament of West Papua (NPWP)/West Papua National Committee (KNPB). The ULMWP formed in Vanuatu as a united front in order to apply for membership of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, an important regional organisation of Melanesian states. The ULMWP has not managed to achieve more than Observer status within the MSG, however it has served as an important representative of West Papua on the international stage and its president, Benny Wenda, has had success building up ULMWP's legitimacy as a representative of the West Papuan people. Since December 2020 the ULMWP formed a 'Provisional Government' and has been building and designing organisational and constitutional structures since then to prepare for a Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

WPNCL (West Papua National Coalition for Liberation): One of the core organisations behind the ULMWP, the WPNCL had a large OPM contingent amongst its founding members. Despite this, for much of its history the WPNCL has pushed primarily for independence through dialogue with Indonesia. WPNCL is associated with the older generation of West Papuan independence activists.

NRFPB (Federal Republic of West Papua): Declared in October 2011, the NRFPB is another claimant government for

Papuan working class to exploit, and attempts to create a Papuan collaborator class have been lacking, and usually undermined by an unwillingness to protect collaborators from racism. Rather, Indonesia's main goal is West Papua's resources, and the West Papuan people are just an obstacle.

Indonesia's presence in West Papua has been characterised by the worst sort of extractivism. The Indonesian government's single biggest source of revenue is West Papuan gold and copper, ripped out of the earth in a colossal mine known as Grasberg - one of the world's largest single sources of gold and copper. West Papua's forests are being destroyed to harvest Kwila, a vibrant red tree native to Papua that takes 75 to 80 years to mature, and is mostly used for building decks in Australia and New Zealand. Forest that isn't being harvested for lumber is being converted into environmentally damaging Palm Oil plantations or, increasingly, agricultural land. West Papua has become central to President Prabowo's pet project of making Indonesia a 'Global Food Barn'. In Merauke, near the border with Papua New Guinea, 1.3 million hectares have already been set aside, 50% for food crops, 30% for sugarcane and 20% for Palm Oil. Probowo's ultimate goal is to create 3 million hectares of new agricultural land - 2 million for rice and 1 million for sugarcane.

With all of this extraction - whether of gold, timber or crops - comes the military. First to forcibly seize the land, and then to provide 'security' once the local population begins to resist these seizures. Indonesian security forces routinely deploy violence against Papuans. Usage of tear gas, live fire, rape and torture have all been reported, with Indonesian security forces generally attempting to shift blame to West Papuan independence fighters, despite regularly being caught on camera. With the recent election of Prabowo Subianto, a hard-line reactionary and war criminal, violence in West Papua is increasing exponentially.

West Papua, Indonesia and the Pacific

Core to the West Papuan independence struggle is a desire for West Papua to be part of Melanesia and wider Oceania, rather than a part of Asia. Regional solidarity has always been a strong component of Melanesian politics, and in the flaxroots movements West Papua has often had strong support across Oceania. However, Indonesia has long used its position as a regional power to diplomatically isolate West Papua from international support.

Indonesia plays an important role in America's military infrastructure in the region, and this importance is only growing in the wake of the Obama era 'Pivot to Asia' and the Post-Obama 'Indo-Pacific Strategy'. As the US increasingly plays on a supposed Chinese security threat to tie more Pacific countries into a network of integrated military relationships, Indonesia is itself able to leverage its position as a military power within that network to tie smaller nations to its own foreign policy.

The two most egregious cases of this are Fiji and Papua New Guinea. Despite having the strongest ties to West Papua, and despite West

West Papua, separate from the 'Provisional Government' of the ULMWP.

KNPB (West Papua National Committee)/ NPWP (National Parliament of West Papua): The KNPB was founded in November 2010 out of the Student's Movement, as a way to support the International Parliamentarians for West Papua (IPWP) and the International Lawyers for West Papua (ILWP) both organisationally and as a media clearing house. Led by Victor Yeimo and Buchtar Tabuni, KNPB works closely with all the major West Papuan groups and advocates for independence via referendum. In order to facilitate this the KNPB formed the NPWP as a network of regional organisations within West Papua, building up the local political representation.

Free West Papua campaign: The Free West Papua campaign is the international equivalent of the KNPB. Run out of Benny Wenda's office, Free West Papua promotes and publicises news and statements about the West Papuan struggle to an international audience.

WPNA (West Papua National Authority): Another self-claimed provisional government, the WPNA is the most important organisation to have not been officially involved with the ULMWP. Sometimes referring to themselves as the Republic of West Melanesia, the WPNA was founded in August 2004 and was inspired by the 'Nonviolent Movement' which emerged in West Papua in the 80s. WPNA's key demand currently is what they're referring to as the 'Washington Solution', in which they hope that the US can mediate an agreement between them and the Indonesian government. ■

Papuans own expressed affinity for their eastern siblings, PNG's government has long ignored West Papua, and instead pursued a cordial relationship with Indonesia. PNG has even gone so far as to block the ULMWP's bid to become a full member of the MSG and instead supported Indonesia's right to speak on behalf of West Papuans as an associate member of the MSG. Ironically, this is largely due to the shared border with West Papua – instead of seeing this as a connection, the PNG government has long seen this border as a source of potential security issues and has built a strong relationship with Indonesia on the basis of securing this border.

As support for West Papua grows amongst the wider Oceanic community, PNG's military relationship with Indonesia is also growing, with Jakarta and Port Moresby recently formalising an ongoing defence agreement whereby the two countries would co-operate on a series of ongoing military operations, and Indonesia committing to help build the capacity of PNG's military.

Jakarta has pursued a similar strategy with Fiji. Historically a staunch advocate for Melanesian solidarity, in recent years the Fijian government has been bought out by the Indonesians, officially affirming a respect for Indonesia's 'territorial integrity' in exchange for US$6 million in aid as well as ongoing training and infrastructural support for the Fijian military. Crucially, both this deal with Fiji and the deal with PNG involve officers training in Indonesia's military schools – a move seen as creating long-lasting integration between two sets of militaries.

Indonesia's military presence in the Pacific has long been criticised by the Australian government. However, the Australian government is equally invested in the military integration taking place as part of the US's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Additionally, Australian capital is deeply involved in Indonesia's occupation of West Papua. The Grasberg Mine is largely supplied from Australia, and Australian companies are heavily involved in the colonial lumber industry in West Papua.

However, West Papua is not without its allies. The government of Vanuatu, long a staunch supporter of Melanesian solidarity in general, has consistently supported the ULMWP's right to be a full member of both the MSG and the Pacific Islands Forum, and has regularly pressured Indonesia over their treatment of West Papua. The Solomon Islands and Samoa have followed suit. All three are currently pressuring the Pacific Islands Forum to make a stand on West Papua, citing the increasing violence occurring in the region.

Even inside of Indonesia, solidarity with West Papua is beginning to grow. More and more groups like the Indonesian People's Front for West Papua or the Papuan Lives Matter campaign are raising awareness of what is happening in West Papua, despite harsh repercussions from the government. As resistance to the increasingly reactionary government in Jakarta grows, there is hope that this new progressive wave in Indonesia may also see Indonesians willing to challenge the colonialism being done in their name.

Why West Papua matters

It always feels somewhat heartless to explain why a people's struggle matters. That they're struggling for the chance to exercise their right to self-determination and their right to live in peace feels like it should be enough. However, as socialists, we understand that asking these questions can deepen our commitment to a struggle and light the way towards the best way to win.

The plight of West Papua throws into stark relief many of the forces at play in Oceania. By following what countries and groups are willing to be complicit in Indonesia's occupation and then tracing their economic or military ties back to Indonesia, one can create an incredibly clear picture of the shape of colonial capitalism in the region.

In a more ideological sense, solidarity with West Papua is important for challenging notions of Oceania as an empty region filled with islands populated solely by 'savages'. Oceania has been effectively divided by white supremacist ideology, which hinders alternative visions for the region. Building solidarity within Australia and Polynesia with struggles in West Papua, and Melanesia more generally, breaks down these divisions and helps us build a new united vision for Oceania.

Environmentally, the West Papuan rainforest is incredibly important. It's the largest continuous stretch of rainforest outside of the Amazon, and serves as the 'lungs of the pacific', pulling in huge amounts of CO_2 and converting it to oxygen. It is also one of the most biodiverse regions in the world, much of which is unique to the island. West Papuan independence movements see preserving this rainforest as a key goal of independence - the ULMWP in particular has centred its constitutional proposals around West Papua being 'the first Green State'.

Papua Merdeka! ■ **Bernard M / Organise Aotearoa for Temokalati**

Class & National Liberation in the Pacific

There is no road to genuine liberation in the Pacific without both the overthrow and destruction of the ANZAC-American imperialist block, and the destruction of the entire system of widespread poverty and exploitation that supports both the imperialist overlords and their local allies, no matter if their title be King, President, Chief, or Boss.

An Ocean of Class Peace?

The Pacific historically has been an arena long overlooked by the international left. Outside of periods of mass social crisis (see Kanaky 1981 and 2024, Tonga 2006, Vanuatu 2022), the Pacific is under-analysed in terms of class struggle. The countries which border it (and often exploit it) are treated with much deeper research and care in comparison. How many publications have poured out across the world analysing class struggle in America, China, Japan, Australia, Korea, Indonesia, New Zealand, and South America? Potentially, the most prominent work on the class struggle in Polynesia, and through that the broader Pacific, is the Spartacist League of New Zealand's 1981 text Towards a Socialist Polynesia. Despite being politically weak, the text remains historically relevant if only because it tries to give a communist perspective on what communists should be doing in the Pacific region. It also emphasises the need for an international revolution which can sweep away the left-overs of feudalism, and free the region from capitalism and imperialism.

The Pacific is defined historically by its respective colonial occupations, much of which took place in the 19th century. Most of the countries in the Pacific region, with the exception of Tonga, were under the control of various colonial and imperialist powers (some still are!), such as the Americans, the British, and at various points, the Japanese. Ignoring the existence of social classes in the Pacific often leads people to defining the Pacific solely by its colonial occupations, and not as a living region with people who struggle independently for their liberation. While Liberals see the Pacific as an intermediary region between China and Australia/New Zealand/America, Marxists see the Pacific as a region peripheral to capitalism, and exploited on that basis. It therefore follows that Marxists see the only path out of this exploitation being through the struggle of Pacific workers and toilers.

Laurie Aarons (Communist Party of Australia) in Jakarta, 1954. Photo: Tribune archive.

In 1848, Marx wrote that "the history of all hitherto existing societies, is the history of class struggle." This history includes the Pacific, though it is often forgotten. There is a long history of class struggle and industrial action in the Pacific region. This includes the 2005 Public Servants strike in Tonga, the 2006 riot, the many general strikes in the Solomon Islands, and the long history of industrial actions and organising in Fiji. Everything in the Pacific, from language, culture, and clothing, to living standards, wages, and the status of women, has been shaped by the struggle of one class (the workers and toilers) against another (nobles and capitalists). In turn, the nature of this struggle is shaped by the imperialist domination, exploitation, and control of the Pacific.

Mass struggles across the Pacific have taken place over the last century, and have seen the emergence of an undeveloped, but growing, Pasifika working class. This working class fights a battle not just for the interests of their class, in alliance with the toilers, but also a struggle for democratic rights and liberties, against the imperialists and feudalists. Major outbursts in the struggle by Pasifika workers are often suppressed by imperialist forces from Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. This is to ensure the enduring security of imperialist ventures in the Pacific, from banking, to shipping, to mineral extraction.

At the same time, thousands of workers from across the Pacific travel to the pacific rim countries (mainly, Australia and New Zealand, but also America) to work for horrendous wages, in intensely poor conditions, in order to send money back to their home countries. In 2023, 50% of Tonga's GDP was remittances (money sent from foreign workers to their

Pasifika workers are brought into Australia under the PALM scheme to work for meagre wages in the agricultural sector.

family in their home country). This sharpens and develops the Pasifika working class, who, in working in the imperialist countries, enter unions and develop basic union consciousness. The task is to ensure that when these workers return to their home countries, they bring this consciousness with them.

The struggle for democracy and the struggle for national liberation are inseparable. The democratic aspirations of the Pasifika workers and toilers will always be suppressed by the imperialists and their supporters: the chiefs, nobles, and capitalists. Therefore, any struggle for democracy which does not aim to break the control of imperialism is a struggle doomed to fail, as we see time and time again with the democratic movement in Tonga.

It's up to communists to combine these struggles, and present a revolutionary program which aims to accomplish both the overthrow of the imperialists, the overthrow of the domestic oppressors, and the establishment of a democratic, emancipatory system. It's also up to communists to win the Pasifika workers and toilers to the global struggle – as the struggle against capitalism, against imperialism, and for emancipation, is by its nature a global struggle. We can't struggle against the capitalists in Canberra and Washington without working alongside the militant workers of Australia and the U.S.

No road forward with the chiefs

In struggles against imperialism, there's always a layer of home-grown capitalists who position themselves as being against imperialism. This layer, often made up of the 'middle class' and small capitalists, aim to present themselves as the only viable alternative to foreign imperialists. They frame their struggle in terms of opposing foreign ownership, and reinvigorating the domestic

TONGA VOTES 2025

Only 49% of Tonga's eligible voter population turned out to vote in this year's general election, a dramatic decrease from 2021's 64%. There are numerous reasons for this, the main cause being the ongoing fuel crisis. Many were unable to vote as they were unable to travel to voting areas, or were stuck trying to get fuel for themselves in the process.

Tongan workers and toilers overwhelmingly rejected the Democratic Party: they did not win a single seat in this election. This result is disappointing, but not surprising. The Democratic Party has failed to mobilise its supporters, and failed to provide workers and toilers with a political alternative to the independents and the royalists.

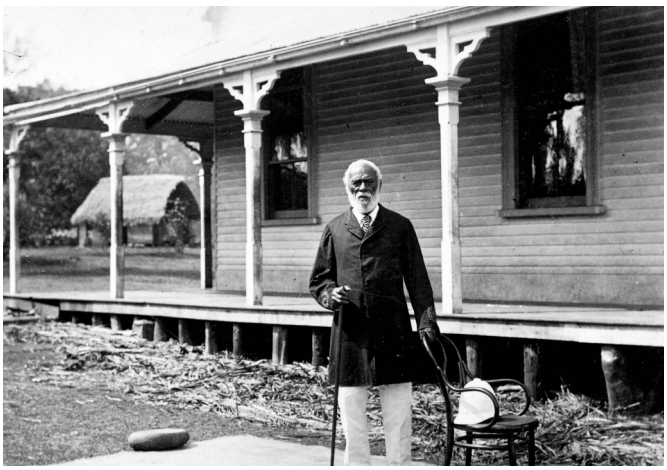
While scepticism of the monarchy is at an all-time high, the Democrats have failed to use this to their advantage. They have instead kowtowed to the royalists, and to their worldly representative in PM 'Aisake Eke. Although we called for a critical Democratic Party vote, we had no illusions that the Democrats would actually manage to do anything (quite like their similarly named American counterparts!).

This election solidifies our critique: that the movement for democracy in Tonga is doomed if it can't put up a fight against the royalists and the capitalists, foreign and domestic. Many voters wanted action against the royalty's involvement in politics: foreign affairs being taken over by the King caused controversy across the islands. Yet, despite being handed easy wedge issues on a silver platter, the Democrats still failed to make a dent.

Now, the Democratic Party has no seats in parliament. They have been totally supplanted by the non-aligned, more often than not pro-royalist independents (including Eke). Years and years of political struggle to build the party in the first place have been squandered. It's hard to think of it as anything more than a waste.

The need for a socialist party in Tonga is greater than ever. Only such a party, which places the workers and toilers at the front of its political struggle, can even attempt to win the democratic gains that the Democratic Party can only promise emptily.

Forward to Socialism! ■



George Tupou I, first king of a unified Tonga, 1880s.

economy. In the Pacific, this layer often includes local chiefs, and sometimes, nobles. Through good sounding slogans and community ties, they are able to trick the workers and toilers into supporting them. But this layer of home-grown capitalists and nobles struggle against imperialism only to the extent that they can carve out space for themselves, so they can supplant the imperialists and make the profit instead. They have no genuine interest in national liberation.

Their interests as a class point them toward alliances and compromises with imperialism. Centuries ago, the nobles, chiefs and warlords of the Pacific made alliances both with each other and with European colonialists. In many cases, this led to their total subordination to colonial powers, such as in Fiji and Samoa. In Tonga, the nobility was able to forge an alliance with British colonialists which prevented Tonga's direct colonisation, at the cost of Tonga tagging along with Britain in its imperialist adventures. This continues to this day: instead of Britain, Tonga tags along with the U.S. in its own imperialist adventures, such as its cruel and murderous invasion of Iraq. Only now, centuries later, do the nobles and chiefs realise that their deal with the devil was not to their advantage.

When liberal democrats in the Pacific emerge and claim to oppose imperialism and domination, more often than not they turn renegade, and attack the forces that supported them. In Tonga, Clive Edwards, once a "pro-democratic" politician, now supports the royalty in suppressing the workers and toilers, claiming that democracy is "too expensive". In Fiji, in spite of the promises of politicians and soldiers, nothing has improved in the struggle for democracy. Military rule looms like a sword of Damocles over the Fijian masses. The masses must not put their trust in these deceivers and misleaders. They have no genuine interest in overthrowing imperialism, and have made this clear time and time again.

Permanent Revolution & the Pacific

Throughout the 20th century, the official communist movement (situated in Moscow, USSR) defended the "stageist" theory of revolution. This theory posited that in order for socialism to be possible, there must first be a liberal-democratic revolution, and a period of capitalist rule. This resulted in the official communist movement (the "Marxist-Leninists") supporting alliances between the workers, toilers, and the aforementioned home-grown capitalists, the "national bourgeoisie" as they are called. This policy was upheld for decades, in countries such as South Africa, China (where a revolution won power in 1949), Algeria, Mozambique, and other 'third-world' countries. This strategy has failed again. In China, where the revolution succeeded, the alliance with the "national bourgeoisie" rapidly deteriorated. After 1949, they fled to Taiwan, and formed a U.S. puppet government in Taipei intent on destroying the revolution! In the worst examples, such as Algeria, the communists simply lost to the liberal and conservative wings of the national liberation movement. There is only one pathway to liberation for the Pacific: a revolutionary socialist movement, made up of the workers and toilers, opposed to the capitalists (foreign and domestic), imperialists, nobles, and oppressors.

The workers, in alliance with the toilers, must lead the struggle against imperialism and capitalism. This is the only way to struggle for national liberation, as alliances with capitalists will lead to capitulation and failure. Numerous questions and tensions remain unanswered by the liberal, pro-capitalist "democrats". What to do about the parasites (kings, bishops, nobles)? How to distribute the land? How to resolve the oppression of women? These questions are vital, but cannot be resolved while under the domination of imperialism.

Against this imperialist-feudal collaboration, the workers must forge an alliance with the peasantry and commit itself to a revolution against both pillars of oppression. They must commit themselves to a revolution in permanence, driving the capitalists and imperialists before them, until the Pacific is united under the red banner of freedom, socialism, and democracy. ■ **Brunhilda O & Max J for Temokalati**

We want your thoughts

We want to engage our readers by developing a relatively active letters section. We therefore encourage readers to send their thoughts, questions, concerns, and commentaries to us through email: **temokalati@proton.me**

Pasifika writers wanted

We are looking for writers primarily from a Pasifika (Pacific Island/Oceanian) background. We want to publish a broad range of left-wing, progressive, and socialist views of activists, militants, workers/toilers, and otherwise politically engaged Pacific Islanders.

To contribute to Temokalati, you should contact us via email (see left).

Below: Sitiveni Rabuka (centre, left) during his attempted coup in Fiji in 1987. He would attempt two coups in 1987.

Ho Chi Minh

"The capitalists often boast that their constitutions guarantee the rights of the individual, democratic liberties and the interests of all citizens. But in reality, only the bourgeoisie enjoy the rights recorded in these constitutions. The working people do not really enjoy democratic freedoms; they are exploited all their life and have to bear heavy burdens in the service of the exploiting class."

Thousands of activists flocked to Newcastle (Australia) to attend Rising Tide's People's Blockade, an attempt by activists to block Newcastle's coal port. Climate change is a pivotal issue for Pasifika workers and toilers.